

Managing Through an Epidemic

An epidemic or other public health crisis may have substantial implications for your workplace. Workplaces must balance how to manage the risk of contagion against the need to complete necessary tasks. These tips may help you weather the crisis:

- ▶ **Ask employees to stay home if they are sick.** Public health officials generally recommend that people with contagious illnesses should stay home until their fever has been gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- ▶ **Keep it clean.** Provide bleach-based solutions and encourage your team to clean shared surfaces regularly. Doorknobs, desks, counters, telephones, keyboards, and shared equipment are all places where germs can easily spread.
- ▶ **Encourage frequent hand washing.** Post reminders to wash hands for at least 20 seconds in bathrooms and kitchens. Placing bottles of alcohol-based hand sanitizer and sanitary wipes throughout the workplace is also helpful.
- ▶ **Check with HR regarding telecommuting options.** Remote work is one way to decrease the risk of exposure for your staff. Telecommuting is also a good option for individuals who are only mildly ill or who may have been exposed to an illness but are not experiencing symptoms.
- ▶ **Lead by example.** Eat healthy meals, get sufficient sleep, and follow the recommendations of public health officials regarding hand washing, cleaning surfaces, and staying home when sick. Emphasize the importance of good self-care to your team.
- ▶ **Communicate.** An epidemic or other health crisis is stressful. Team members may be worried about being exposed to an illness at work or bringing it home to their families. Provide as much information as possible about what is happening and how the organization intends to handle the situation. Remember to protect the privacy of individual team members in all communications regarding a possible exposure at the workplace.
- ▶ **Observe quarantine protocols.** If a public health department determines that a local quarantine is necessary, fully comply with their instructions.
- ▶ **Support your team during a quarantine.** Reach out to anyone who has been put under quarantine due to exposure to an illness. Remind the person that LifeMatters and other company resources are available. If the individual is worried about missing work or falling behind on projects, provide reassurance.
- ▶ **Seek help.** LifeMatters is available to provide emotional support and practical suggestions for managing through an epidemic. Call 24/7/365.

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